

welfare reform a priority this year. Meanwhile, in the last 2 years, we've cut through Federal redtape to give 26 States, more than half the country, the authority to conduct their own welfare reform experiments. And Republicans and Democrats now agree on tougher child support enforcement. They all agree that we have to have national action on tougher child support enforcement because 30 percent or more of the child support cases that are delinquent cross State boundaries.

I've worked hard on this. Since I've been President, child support collections are up substantially. And I just issued a tough Executive order to crack down on delinquency by Federal employees.

If deadbeat parents paid all the child support they should in this country, we could immediately move over 800,000 mothers and children off welfare. Let me say that again: If deadbeat parents paid the child support they owe, we could move immediately over 800,000 mothers and children off welfare. This goes way beyond welfare. Millions of children of working parents would have more secure lives and much brighter futures if the errant parents, absent parents, paid what they owe.

The welfare reform plan I sent to Congress last year included five key provisions for tough child support enforcement: employer reporting of new hires to catch deadbeats who move from job to job, uniform interstate child support laws, computerized statewide collection to speed up payments, streamlined efforts to identify the father in every case, and tough new penalties, like driver's license revocation.

These reforms will work. According to a report issued today by the Department of Human Services—of Health and Human Services, if we crack down on deadbeat parents by making these five provisions the law all over America, child support collections would go up by \$24 billion in the next 10 years.

I am pleased that the House Republicans have come our way on these child support enforcement issues. They have included four of the five steps I proposed in their welfare bill. But I think the fifth step is crucial as well. Our plan calls on States to deny driver's licenses and professional licenses to people who refuse to pay the money they owe for their own children. Nineteen States are doing that today, and they're collecting a lot more child support as a result.

So I hope the House Republicans will take a look at these new findings and join us to send deadbeat parents all across this country a loud signal: If you neglect your responsibility to support your children, we'll suspend your license, garnish your pay, track you down, and make you pay.

Eighteen years ago, Gerri Jensen's husband abandoned her and her two young sons. She held down several low-paying jobs but eventually was forced to turn to welfare because her ex-husband stopped paying child support altogether. She got so fed up with weak laws and bureaucratic runarounds that she launched a grassroots movement to crack down on deadbeat parents nationwide. We are all in her debt, and we all owe an obligation to all the people like her in America who are doing their dead-level best to be good parents. They deserve our support.

Gerri Jensen stood up and fought to make our laws reflect our values. No parent has a right to walk away from responsibility to his or her children. Now, if we work together, we can make this kind of responsibility the law of our land.

Thanks for listening.

NOTE: The address was recorded at 3:23 p.m. on March 17 in the Roosevelt Room at the White House for broadcast at 10:06 a.m. on March 18.

Statement on Proposed Line-Item Veto Legislation

March 20, 1995

The Senate is now debating the line-item veto legislation which passed last month in the House. I urge the Senate to pass the strongest

possible line-item veto and to make it effective immediately. If the Members of Congress from both parties are serious about cutting the deficit,

give me this line-item veto, and I will get started right away. This is one area where both parties can and should come together.

I have advocated the line-item veto for a very long time. When I was a Governor, I had a line-item veto and I balanced 12 budgets in a row. I advocated the line-item veto when I ran for President, and I have pushed for it since becoming President because it is a very effective tool for cutting wasteful Government spending and bringing down the deficit.

We have made great headway in cutting wasteful spending. We have already cut the Federal bureaucracy by 102,000 positions, on the way to cutting a quarter million. We are bringing the deficit down by more than \$600 billion. My new budget calls for another \$81 billion in deficit reduction.

But there is still too much waste in the Federal budget. This year I have proposed eliminating 131 programs altogether and consolidating 270 others. I proposed many of these spending cuts last year and the year before,

only to have Congress tell me I couldn't cut their pet projects. I tried to cut \$16 million for the Small Business Administration's tree planting program, but Congress put it back in the budget. Congress even spent \$12 million for a cattle tick eradication project.

Well, this year, if the Congress gives me the line-item veto, I will cut each one of these programs, and a whole lot more. I also think the line-item veto should be applied to the revenue as well as the spending sides of the budget, so I can curb wasteful tax and spending provisions.

This is really about closing the door on business-as-usual in Washington. If Congress is serious about changing the way Washington works and getting a handle on wasteful spending, they will put politics aside, stand up to the special interests, and pass the bill.

The President, no matter what party, needs the line-item veto to bring discipline to the budget process. I urge the Senate to pass it and make it effective right now.

Letter to Congressional Leaders on Welfare Reform

March 20, 1995

Dear Mr. Speaker:

This week, the historic national debate we have begun on welfare reform will move to the floor of the House of Representatives. Welfare reform is a top priority for my Administration and for Americans without regard to party. I look forward to working with Republicans and Democrats in both houses of Congress to enact real reform that promotes work and responsibility and makes welfare what it was meant to be: a second chance, not a way of life.

In the last two years, we have put the country on the road to ending welfare as we know it. In 1993, when Congress passed our economic plan, we cut taxes for 15 million working Americans and rewarded work over welfare. We collected a record level of child support in 1993—\$9 billion—and last month I signed an executive order to crack down on federal employees who owe child support. In two years, we have granted waivers from federal rules to 25 states, so that half the country is now carrying out significant welfare reform experiments that promote

work and responsibility instead of undermining it.

I have always sought to make welfare reform a bipartisan issue. I still believe it can and must be. Unfortunately, the House Republican bill in its current form does not appear to offer the kind of real welfare reform that Americans in both parties expect. It is too weak on moving people from welfare to work, not as tough as it should be on deadbeat parents, and too tough on innocent children.

Last year, I sent Congress the most sweeping welfare reform plan any administration has ever presented. It did not pass, but I believe the principles and values at its core will be the basis of what ultimately does pass:

*First, the central goal of welfare reform must be moving people from welfare to work, where they will earn a paycheck, not a welfare check. I believe we should demand and reward work, not punish those who go to work. If people need child care or job skills in order to go to work, we should help them get it. But